

AFRICAN UNION

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**REPRESENTATION OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
AT ASSEMBLIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION
(Item proposed by the Republic of Senegal)**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE ON AGENDA ITEM PROPOSED
BY THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL
ENTITLED
“REPRESENTATION OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
AT ASSEMBLIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION”**

At the time we were setting up the African Union, we were convinced that no African country would be able to meet, single-handedly, the development challenge in a context marked by social, economic and political changes occurring in the world.

In that connection, we had pinned our hopes on political and economic integration and on the creation of networks of solidarity to enable us successfully cope with globalization.

From the earliest moments of its establishment, the African Union attracted great attention in Africa and the Diaspora. Consequently, Intellectuals, members of Civil Society and private sector actors, notably, appealed to the African Union to take on board all segments of the society in the project to build the Continent's future.

During my trips to Europe and America, African Diaspora representatives have approached me to strongly request for an opportunity to make their own contribution to all major African projects.

We ourselves, dear colleagues, have acknowledged, during our deliberations in these same premises, that in America, the Caribbean and in Europe, we have in the first and second generations of the Diaspora, proven expertise, in all sectors, which we greatly need.

That expertise is available. It is knocking on our door. This is an opportunity we should avail ourselves of without delay.

The Diaspora has expressed a real desire to return to Africa which is founded on the need to identify with their roots.

But, beyond the sentimental aspects of this return to their origins which, however, should be taken into account, it is up to us to organize and direct the expertise of the Diaspora by involving it in concrete development projects.

That is why I had proposed that we make the Diaspora the sixth region of our continental organization. I would like to remind you that this proposal had been accepted in principle at the Durban Summit and it was necessary to examine the conditions for its implementation.

We, at the time, made a commitment to invite and encourage the full participation of the Diaspora, as an important part of the Continent, in building the African Union.

For the same reason, we organized in Dakar, in 2004, the first Conference of Intellectuals of Africa and the Diaspora. The second conference was held in Salvador de Bahia in 2005.

Furthermore, such an initiative would also enhance preparations for the African Union/African Diaspora Summit, at the level of Heads of State and Government, scheduled for the first half of 2008 in South Africa.

It is in the more embracing prospect of bringing the Diaspora on board in the accomplishment of the "African Union" project that I propose to the Conference to accept in the deliberations of our Assemblies a representation of the Diaspora.

This representation will sit, following the principle of rotation, for a term of five years, as a privileged observer. It could take the floor if the Conference requested their views on a specific topic. It will, above all, be in an ideal position to report, to those they represent, on our discussions on development where our needs are most urgent.

2008

Representation of the African diaspora at assemblies of the African Union (Item proposed by the Republic of Senegal)

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